

now. Now we must determine whether someone who is a member of the President's administration will be an independent and impartial jurist on the Nation's highest Court.

The American people also want a nominee with the requisite legal experience. They instinctively know a lifetime position on the Supreme Court does not lend itself to on-the-job training. Of course, one does not need to have prior experience as a judge before being appointed to the country's highest Court, but it strikes me that if a nominee does not have traditional experience, they should have substantial litigation experience. Ms. Kagan has neither, unlike Justice Rehnquist, for instance, who was in private practice for 16 years prior to his appointment as Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Counsel, a job he had at the time of his appointment to the Supreme Court.

But exploring these questions is precisely what the nominations process is all about. Starting today, both parties will begin the process of carefully reviewing Ms. Kagan's brief litigation experience as well as her judgment and her career in academia, both as a professor and as an administrator. Fulfilling our duty to advise and consent on a nomination of this office requires a thorough process, not a rush to judgment. Senate Republicans will have vigorous debate on the importance of equal justice under law. This principle lies at the very heart of our judicial system. We will diligently review Ms. Kagan's record to ensure that she shares this principle and that she possesses the requisite experience to serve on the Supreme Court.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today the Senate will resume consideration of the Wall Street reform legislation. There will be no rollcall votes today. Senators should expect votes in relation to amendments tomorrow morning.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. We are in morning business.

NATIONAL NURSES WEEK

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, in honor of National Nurses Week, I wish to recognize the more than 3 million nurses who work hard day-in and day-out to give patients the care they de-

serve. Because my wife Mary is a nurse, I have seen firsthand what an enormous impact nurses have on both patients and families. Their compassion and devotion to their patients give families the peace of mind that their loved ones are in good hands. They also play an irreplaceable role in making sure our hospitals and clinics run smoothly. Unfortunately, many nurses are overworked, underpaid, and our hospitals and clinics have trouble retaining them.

Through the Health Care Reform Act Congress passed earlier this year, we made significant strides in addressing many of the challenges nurses face. We expanded the nursing student loan program to help make nursing programs more affordable. We also expanded the nursing loan repayment program and scholarship programs to students who commit to working at an accredited nursing school for 2 years. This will help ensure our nursing schools have the teachers they need to train additional nurses. We invested \$1.5 billion over 5 years in the National Health Service Corps scholarship and loan repayment program for primary care providers, including nurses who practice in underserved areas. In addition, we included \$50 million in grants for nurse-managed health clinics that offer primary care and wellness services to low-income and uninsured Americans.

While we made good progress easing many of the difficulties nurses face, much more still needs to be done. Nurses play such a crucial role in the delivery of care. We need to provide them with the resources they need to do their jobs.

The nursing shortage also remains a serious issue, especially in hard-hit rural areas. To find commonsense solutions to the problems nurses face, I formed the Senate Nursing Caucus with Senator JOHANNES, Senator MIKULSKI, and Senator SNOWE. I urge all of my colleagues to join the caucus to help strengthen the nursing profession and advance the goals of the nursing community. Together, we will explore ways we can enhance the role nurses play in our health care system and address the nationwide nursing shortage.

I ask my colleagues and my fellow Americans to take a moment during National Nurses Week to show your appreciation to nurses across the country for their hard work, commitment, and dedication to their patients. Their dedication is invaluable to the success of our health care system and, most of all, to the patients who depend on them.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to join my colleague from the State of Oregon in speaking on behalf of nurses across America.

We know that with the baby boom generation, we are going to need more nurses than ever, and with these nurses, we will have the professional

medical care we need across this Nation, but we better get busy. We are falling behind. We don't graduate enough nurses now to take care of the anticipated needs, and we have to change that.

Sadly, in many instances we have been poaching nursing talent from other poor nations around the world. Filipino nurses in Chicago play a major role at many hospitals, particularly inner-city hospitals, and nurses from other parts of the world. Many times, the Philippines, for example, generates more medical professionals and expects they will serve overseas, but some places in Africa lose their best medical professionals to higher and more predictable pay in places such as the United States, England, France, and Germany. So we have to reach a point where we are graduating more nursing students each year. Last year in Illinois, 2,000 qualified nursing applicants were turned down because we didn't have the capacity in our nursing schools.

We don't have enough nursing faculty, enough clinical opportunities. We need to really focus on that. So in addition to lauding the nursing profession—I certainly echo my colleague in that regard—we also need to think ahead to make sure we have more nurses when we need them, and that day is going to be fast upon us. So I thank the Senator from Oregon for his words.

FINANCIAL REGULATORY REFORM

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, for those who are here following the Senate today, as announced earlier, we are resuming consideration of this bill, and, of course, it is the Wall Street reform bill, the Financial Stability Act. It is over 1,400 pages long.

The Senator from Virginia who is presiding over the Senate now is a member of the Senate Banking Committee. Senator MARK WARNER has worked on this bill, and large sections of it are his handiwork in an effort to try to deal with changes on Wall Street which will protect our economy and make certain we don't relive some of the horror stories we have seen over the last several years, and we all know those stories pretty well.

There was a time not that long ago—about a year and a half ago—when, under the previous President, I was brought into a meeting just a few steps away from the Senate floor with the chairman of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, and the Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Paulson. They basically sat down in the first meeting and said: We wanted to let you know the largest insurance company in the world, AIG, is about to go broke. When it goes broke, it is going to bring down so many companies and corporations with it that it can literally crater the American economy. At that point, Chairman Bernanke said: So the Federal Reserve is giving \$85 billion to AIG Corporation.

There was a moment of silence in the room, and finally someone in the